

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 COME-00 AID-05

IGA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

SSC-01 /083 W

-----091308Z 093596 /42

R 091011Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7250

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

UNCLAS COLOMBO 1600

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT NEARS

1. SUMMARY: BECAUSE OF THE PROSPECT THAT THE TWO FINAL SESSIONS OF THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY WILL BE DEVOTED TO LITTLE MORE THAN CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT (RATHER THAN PASSAGE OF TWO FINAL GOVERNMENT BILLS), IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED HERE THAT PARLIAMENT WILL BE DISSOLVED BEFORE THE FINAL LEGAL DATE OF MAY 22. FINANCE MINISTER FELIX DIAS BANDARANAIKE'S ABSENCE FROM THE COUNTRY (FOR EYE SURGERY) LENDS CREDENCE TO THIS; NEVERTHELESS THE PRIME MINISTER HERSELF HAS CONSISTENTLY INDICATED THAT "PARLIAMENT WILL DISSOLVE ITSELF" ON THE STATUTORY DEADLINE. ELECTION TIMING IS ALSO THE SUBJECT OF SPECULATION, WITH EARLY AUGUST SINGLED OUT BECAUSE OF THE ONSET OF RAMADAN AND THE KANDY PERAHERA SEASON ON AUGUST 15. END SUMMARY.

2. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY IS CURRENTLY PROROGUED UNTIL THE MORNING OF MAY 19, AND IS CONSTITUTIONALLY DISSOLVED ON MAY 22. FOR SOME TIME MUCH DISCUSSION HAS OCCURRED OVER WHAT COULD USEFULLY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE SCHEDULED SESSIONS OF MAY 19 AND 20. THE GOVERNMENT  
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HAS MENTIONED TWO BILLS IT WOULD LIKE TO PASS BEFORE FINAL ADJOURNMENT: NATIONALIZATION OF THE THREE FOREIGN BANKS AND ABOLITION OF THE SYSTEM OF RAJAKARIYA (TEMPLE-OWNED) LANDS. NEITHER APPEARS TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF ADOPTION IN THAT SHORT A PERIOD, AS THE OPPOSITION WANTS TO TRY TO USE THE LIMITED SESSION FOR STATEMENTS OF REASONS WHY VARIOUS DEPUTIES HAVE CROSSED INTO OPPOSITION, INCLUDING THE COMMUNIST PARTY, THE

NANDA ELLAWELA GROUP, AND EX-MINISTER T. B. SUBASINGHE. THE EFFECT OF THIS WOULD BE TO TURN THE LAST SESSIONS OF THE PARLIAMENT INTO LITTLE MORE THAN A FORUM FOR ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT JUST BEFORE THE START OF THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.

3. THERE IS A GROWING BELIEF THAT THIS WILL BE PREVENTED BY A DISSOLUTION PRIOR TO MAY 19; THE DATE OF MAY 15 BEING PROMINENTLY SUGGESTED. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NEITHER APPETITE FOR DEBATE NOR ANYTHING TO GAIN THEREFROM. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRIME MINISTER RECENTLY STATED ONCE AGAIN PUBLICLY THAT "PARLIAMENT WILL DISSOLVE ITSELF" ON STATUTORY DEAD-

LINE, INDICATING PERHAPS THAT SHE HAS OTHER IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE THE DEBATE -- OR AVOID IT. IN ANY EVENT, THE GOVERNMENT'S BIGGEST DEBATING GUN (AND SPONSOR OF THE BANK NATIONALIZATION BILL) FINANCE MINISTER, FELIX BANDARANAIKE, IS IN LONDON FOR ANOTHER BOUT OF EYE SURGERY, AND IS NOT EXPECTED BACK FOR FOUR TO SIX WEEKS, AFTER THE NOMINATIONS ARE FILED.

4. A CONFIDANT OF FELIX TOLD US THAT HIS ABSENCE VIRTUALLY ASSURES HIS RUNNING FROM HIS CURRENT ELECTORATE OF DOMPE, INSTEAD OF HIS CONTESTING COLOMBO WEST AGAINST THE OPPOSITION LEADER J. R. JAYAWARDENE, AS HE WILL NOT BE BACK IN THE COUNTRY IN TIME TO LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN IN A NEW ELECTORATE. HE ADDED THAT THE DOCTORS HAD ADVISED FELIX THE SURGERY HAD TO BE DONE WITHIN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS TO SAVE HIS EYE; HE HAD CHOSEN A SUDDEN DEPARTURE NOW IN ORDER TO BE BACK FOR THE CAMPAIGN PROPER, RATHER THAN TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE NOMINATION LISTS ARE FORMALLY FILED.

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5. ON ELECTION TIMING, THE FIRST HALF OF AUGUST APPEARS MORE AND MORE PROBABLE, GIVEN THE BEGINNING OF RAMADAN AND THE KANDY PERAHERA SEASON ABOUT AUGUST 15. THE PRIME MINISTER SO STATED IN A CURRENT ELECTORAL SWING THROUGH THE NUWARA ELIYA DISTRICT, WHERE SON ANURA IS RUNNING AGAINST UNP INCUMBENT GAMINI DISSANAYAKE AND ESTATE TAMIL LEADER S. THONDAMAN FOR THE THREE SEATS IN THE NEWLY-ENLARGED DISTRICT (THEREBY PRESUMABLY ASSURING THE ELECTION OF EACH OF THE THREE, DESPITE THE EXPECTED VERBAL CLASHES).

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NNN



## Message Attributes

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